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DELPHINIUMS

of the

LYONDEL GARDENS

Home of

The Magic of Seeds Cross Pollinated By Hand

Leon H. Leonian

Breeder



Morgantown, W. Va.

1 9 3 4

THE LYONDEL GARDENS

DEVOTED TO THE BETTERMENT OF DELPHINIUM

Every year each grower or seedsman puts out attractive bulletins and tells the world how good he is, and how excellent his products are. Unblushingly each one claims the world's best and runs out of superlatives in describing the merits of his particular strain. We do not claim the world's best delphiniums, nor do we wish to say that ours are unsurpassed. Furthermore, no matter what we might say, the oft-disillusioned gardener will listen to it with his tongue in his cheek. We have, therefore, decided to let our old customers do the talking. The following excerpts tell an old, old story to those who have grown the Lyondel Hybrids, but those who do not know the Lyondels, should not fail carefully to read them. So, here we go:

Bethel, Ohio.

"I can truthfully say that I have never had such a display of delphiniums in my garden before. It is the first time I have been able to produce florets measuring nearly three inches across. Two characteristics are outstanding: vigor and vivid color tones."

L. E. Peart.

Berkeley, Calif.

"They (the Lyondel Hybrids) have characteristics which I have not found in plants from other sources — I have tried seeds from everywhere, domestic and imported — these are variety in form, variety in color much greater, and a lasting quality that I have not found in any other strain. The sepals do not fall as quickly as in other strains, thereby making them much better for cut flowers and for exhibition. My customers nearly went wild over the Lyondel blooms — they couldn't see the others at all while the Lyondels were in bloom."

E. D. Crowl.

Oakland, N. J.

"That dozen plants, by the way (Lyondel baby seedlings) was the most generous dozen in more ways than one I have run across. They are now in their maiden bloom. The flowers are the best I have ever seen, and I have visited gardens in England where they were very proud of their varieties. There was only one poor one in the lot."

R. D. Gartrell.

Stuyvesant-On-Hudson, N. Y.

"I think even you would be proud of the plants I showed this year from Lyondel seed planted in March. They stood six and seven feet in the garden of one of my clients, with magnificent flowers 2 1/2 to 3 inches across, and with splendid spikes. I had plants from several other strains and marked them as they were set in the ground. When they bloomed, I found that the specimens attracting the most attention were the ones marked Lyondel."

Frances L. Rathbone.

Wheeling, W. Va.

"The delphinium seed which I secured from you sometime ago showed marvelous germination. From one of the packets supposed to contain 100 seeds, I secured 103 good plants; and very similar results from the other two packets."

C. W. Reed.

Lewiston, Minn.

"I spent many hours watching this beautiful, gorgeous array of flowers (from the Lyondel seeds). I never knew real delphiniums until I had yours. Your seeds are worth the price. I would not take five times the money for the plants I got from your seeds."

Rev. M. Graeve.

Washington, D. C.

"I have had about six more of your seedlings bloom for me. The amazing thing to me is that everyone that has bloomed to date has been a worth-while flower. A friend of mine who had something over 1,500 seedlings (from sources other than Lyondel), has not produced out of the whole lot as many worth-while blooms as I did from a dozen of your seedlings."

C. E. Quinn.

Jersey City, N. J.

"Several of the Lyondel seedlings are now blooming. For size of florets, color, arrangement on the spike, for sheer beauty, I have never seen any to compare with them. There was nothing at the International Flower Show at the New York Grand Central Palace last March to equal them. I have several hundred other plants in my garden, and I intend discarding them entirely and replacing them with Lyondels."

Dr. H. A. Kuhl.

Hicksville, Ohio.

"The very finest things I have this year are your productions; the largest flowers and most massive spikes are from your stock. These are the finest delphiniums I have seen and am more enthusiastic than ever. I do not intend to grow any other strain but Lyondels. My brother is of the same opinion."

Dr. H. M. Jordan.

Boyce, Virginia.

"We have had such great success with your splendid crosses. You would be proud of some of the florets, even larger than those you show in your catalog. In a bed of about 80 plants of your double whites, there were only 4 blues, the rest an even lot, some purest white, even the bee. The flowers are large, some three inches across; the spikes are fine, up to five feet or more. All this is their maiden bloom, and they are a beautiful sight."

E. G. Butler.

Winnetka, Ill.

"Up to the moment I considered the joy of plant breeders as something belonging exclusively to themselves, but since one of your delphinium seedlings has come into bloom, I am convinced that the labor of the breeder is far-reaching and great joy is transmitted to the ultimate amateur gardener. I cannot tell you how thrilled I am over this plant, the first seedling to bloom. The bloom is a revelation to me; I am getting to be a perfect "nut" about it. If I had paid for the one seed what I paid for the whole packet I would feel paid many times over in the joy I have had in this one lovely plant."

W. L. Hilpert.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

"I am disposing of all the old stock, NOT ANY OF YOURS, and am making room for my new stock (from the Lyondel seeds). There is no comparison with yours."

James G. Dickson.

Youngstown, Ohio.

"My plants that bloomed from your seed this spring were simply wonderful; such colors, and what size florets!"

J. F. Hovart, Jr.

Mercersburg, Pa.

"The seeds which I got last year came up so well, almost 100 per cent germination."

Mrs. E. M. Metcalfe

Oakland, Md.

"I have read the description of your most beautiful delphiniums which I had the pleasure of seeing several weeks ago while visiting your garden. In the last few years I have seen several gardens in the East, but have failed to see anything in delphinium kingdom that could compare with yours."

H. M. Dawson.

Saint Paul, Minn.

"I have tested different strains of delphinium, including practically every American strain, and a number from England. With due regard to everything, your delphiniums, on actual performance, outrank every other that I have had the opportunity to observe and study. I am especially impressed by the uniform high quality of your stock. I found very few if any scrubs in yours; something that I cannot say about the others. Your seeds show a remarkable trueness to color. For instance, your orchid strain, a very exquisite and delicate shade, was pure. In your Connoisseurs' Series you almost blasted me off my bearings with a very fine dark blue-violet double. Another series of dark blue purples, flowers three inches across, had a remarkable stand. People have gone wild over these in particular."

Robert Schreiner

Johnstown, N. Y.

"I obtained fifty plants from a packet of your remarkable seeds. I am 'very sorry' to say that ALL did not develop to become potential prize-winners. Fourteen of them developed most amazing splendor of bloom, as to brilliancy of color, well proportioned as to form, — and size, — from 2 7/8 to 3 3/8 inches. This was THE STANDARD I adopted by which the others were judged. Reserved judgment upon the next eighteen plants, some of which were undecided as to placing in the 'standard' class. The next eighteen showed indication that they would never meet the standard, but were saved for border plants, and worthy of a place in any flower garden, except that of a 'crank.' Two plants I destroyed as the color did not 'appeal' to me. All seedlings were robust; one plant had leaves 16 1/2 inches in width. All the above plants may be possible winners when judged by another standard."

"From xx (names a leading English firm) I had forty plants, and only one was reserved as outstanding, and three others selected to keep it company; all others were discarded. Florets were small, some single, and ALL plants were of weak growth. Also I had seventeen plants from xxx (names another leading English firm). Only one was reserved as meeting the standard. Four other 'very pretty' plants were reserved to keep company, and the others discarded. Some would have been saved had I not had your plants to judge them."

Frank Bogaskie

Cleveland, Ohio

"This year for the first time I have tried 'the magic of seeds cross-pollinated by hand.' And magic it sure turned out to be, for many of the spikes had pips 3 inches in diameter with resultant beauty impossible to describe."

C. T. Boehmer

In vol. 2, no. 1, of Bulletin of
American Delphinium Society.

Rockford, Ill.

"The seedlings I bought of you last spring were highly satisfactory. I didn't feel justified in discarding a single plant upon seeing them bloom."

Arthur A. Anderson.

A FRANK TALK WITH OUR CUSTOMERS

According to the foregoing excerpts, the Lyondel Hybrids must be top-notchers. BUT THEY ARE NOT! We know their shortcomings more than our customers and we have to be more severely critical of our own product than others. We do not claim perfection, nor anything near perfection. It is very, very difficult to combine all good qualities in one plant, as the hereditary forces are too complex; therefore, despite a very rigid selection, cross breeding and more selections extending over many years, despite a constant testing of leading strains of delphinium from everywhere and incorporating the best with our own hybrids, we are

still far from the goal. Always there is something lacking, and the effort to breed it into a given strain is heart-breakingly slow in producing results. This statement may cost us a lot of customers; but those who must feed their imagination on glowing descriptions and empty promises, are requested to look elsewhere for the "world's best delphinium." On the other hand, those who realize how remote perfection is; who are happy to obtain one outstanding seedling from a bunch of one hundred; who appreciate the difficulties of the breeder and understand that delphiniums, despite all the rapturous descriptions by the originator himself, or by the growers, have many defects which cannot be corrected by just a few crossings and selections, and those who, for the sake of the rare and exceptional quality that may crop out any time, are willing to take a chance and will be able to "take it" in case disappointments follow, may find fascinating surprises in the seeds of Lyondel Hybrids. But we make no promises, no guarantee whatever, nor do we care to have the patronage of chronic kickers and squawkers. Only good sports and good gardeners are welcome; good sports, because the growing of delphinium from seed is not a sure thing and one must be able to take both failures and successes with the same degree of grace; good gardeners, because the poor and inexperienced sorts are not as likely to see and appreciate the true quality when such a thing crops out in their garden. We are convinced that the Lyondel method of seed production offers a better opportunity for obtaining comparatively rare things in delphinium. When any hybrid flower is allowed to self itself or to be pollinated by chance agencies, the quality tends to segregate in the resulting progenies and consequently the seedlings from seeds thus produced are usually mediocre or poor things, rarely if ever approaching the parental splendor. But when two exceptionally good parents are crossed together by hand, there is an aggregation of fine qualities and consequently fewer scrubs, a larger number of good things, and even things superior to either parent. **THUS ARE BETTER VARIETIES PRODUCED, AND THUS ARE THE LYONDEL SEEDS PRODUCED. EVERY SEED WE SELL IS THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF CROSSING TOGETHER SEED AND POLLEN PARENTS OF EXCEPTIONAL VALUE. NO OPEN POLLINATED SEEDS ARE SOLD TO OUR CUSTOMERS OR USED BY US.** But this is not all. **ONCE SOME SEEDLINGS SUPERIOR TO THEIR PARENTS HAVE BEEN OBTAINED, THE PARENTS ARE DISCARDED REGARDLESS OF THEIR BEAUTY.** It is because of this that our customers are so enthusiastic about the Lyondel Hybrids; it is for this reason that we say

"AFTER YOU HAVE TRIED THEM ALL, THEN TREAT YOURSELF TO THE MAGIC OF SEEDS CROSS POLLINATED BY HAND AT THE LYONDEL GARDENS."

And it is because of the same reason that last summer, *one month after our assorted crosses were placed on the market, they were sold to the last seed!*

But there is still another reason: **WE ARE BREEDING DELPHINIUMS UNDER GREAT HANDICAPS.** The environmental conditions of Morgantown, W. Va. where our crosses are made, are everything that delphin-

iums *should not have*. Our summers are too long and too warm. In recent years the rainfall has been too scanty. The soil is abominable, being too shallow and too heavy; so much so that despite large applications of manure, peat-moss, sand and ashes, it still bakes, and cakes, and cracks. Under such conditions good delphiniums become poor delphiniums. This season the drought began early in the spring and continued into the summer. Many of our choice delphiniums of last year began to look like common things; and because they could not "take it," they are being dug up and destroyed. We do not want fair-weather delphiniums but the sorts that will perform well under good conditions or bad. This means that a variety that gives a satisfactory account for itself under the conditions of Morgantown, W. Va., will perform much better in more favorably situated gardens. From time to time we have customers visit us, and it is not at all uncommon for them to say some such thing as this: "Why, the plants I raised from your seeds are even better than yours!" We are happy to have our customers beat us. But the pleasing thing about it is that they keep on buying seeds from us! They realize that the survival and the selection of the fittest is best accomplished under harsher environmental conditions, whereas the ideal soil and climate may tend to make a scrub look like an aristocrat. Therefore, our handicap is also our advantage, as well as that of our customers.

And finally there is another reason: ours is a very small "business," in fact, it is very little more than a self-supporting hobby. We have only a limited time to devote to breeding, consequently seed production is small and seed plants very few. We can afford to be heartlessly rigid about the selection of our seed parents. This year, for instance, some ten thousand young seedlings were planted, but we do not expect to select more than one per cent of this, and after a year's trial this may come down to a mere dozen, yet sufficient to give us all the seed that we can produce and sell. Such a severe selecting process insures a higher quality of seed parents. But if we were to produce seeds by the pound, we would use everything that looked half way decent and the result would be the kind of worthless seed that is now flooding the market.

Our scheme of breeding does not permit of quantity production of seeds. Our customers increase but the seed production remains about the same. Therefore, we can afford to pick and choose our customers, and we again urge that all those who have had no experience with delphinium, leave us alone until they have cut their delphinium teeth on the other fellow's seeds and seedlings.

SEED OFFERINGS FOR 1934

(Only semi-double and double flowers used in our crosses)

Once again we have discarded nearly all of last year's breeding stock in favor of newer and more superior things. We omit a detailed description of the different varieties used in order to save space. We have also discontinued assorted crosses because we cannot produce enough seed to go around and also because we are thoroughly convinced

that a greater variety of good things will result from the closely related mixtures rather than from separate crosses. There will also be a more uniform seed germination because certain incompatible crosses are likely to yield seeds of poor germinating quality. The following assorted series will be available from the latter part of July for as long as the supply lasts:

Series 1: Dark Crosses

Both pollen and seed parents used for seed production in this series have dark colors. Some have bees, others are without bees; aster-type, cyclamen-type, frilled and curled sepalloid sorts, and the conventional type of flowers, as well as many new kinds are here. Particular attention is called to the brilliancy of colors, to the vivid, sparkling tones that have made the Lyondels so desirable, and to the lasting quality of the flowers. Many of the parents have flowers measuring three inches or better; long flower spikes up to four feet; graceful whip-like things, broad, pyramidal spikes, the infinitely charming "Wrexham" type inflorescence, and loose or more compact panicles are here. We have endeavored to breed vigor and heat resistance, disease and drought resistance into these. Seedlings resulting from these crosses should yield largely dark colored flowers, and each packet of seeds should yield at least a few very large flowered types.

Series 2: Light crosses

These are like series 1 except that the colors are all light. By light colors we do not mean the washed-out, toneless sorts, but clear, pure colors possessing a soft luminosity. Attention is called to our orchid-colored, aster-flowering type, a great favorite and one that for sheer beauty and for soft, caress-inviting purity is unsurpassed in our delphiniums.

Series 3: Lavender selfs

We are justly proud of our lavender tones. All sepals are of the same color intensity and absolutely no other color is present. A very large number of the progenies will breed true as to color. There is perhaps a greater variety of floral types here than in any other series, and those who are not familiar with the Lyondels, will be amazed at the great variety of forms not usually encountered in delphiniums. Seeds not available before September.

Series 4: White Crosses

White delphiniums are still in the process of evolution and there is much to be done to bring them up to the same degree of perfection as the colored sorts. However, they create such a charming contrast when planted among the blue and purple delphiniums that everyone should have them. We cannot guarantee that any of our seedlings will come

white; the only guarantee we make is that both the seed and the pollen parents are pure white, semi double, and quite vigorous. We have made our selections very rigidly and there is no reason why some good things should not result. But one should never forecast the behavior of hybrid seeds.

Series 5: Pure Blue Double Crosses

These also are still in a stage of evolution. Some very fine things are now available, but the flowers are still small. If one is satisfied to have fine, graceful spikes of pure blue flowers, without a trace of purple, varying in intensity from soft sky-blue to deep ultramarine and gentian blue, glowing ripples of sapphire and a bit of distilled heaven, one should not hesitate to try seeds of our pure blue, double crosses. But be prepared for disappointments as well as for delicious surprises. Not ready before September.

Series 6: General mixture

Consists of a mixture of the foregoing five crosses.

Series 7: Connoisseurs' Series

Here are included crosses made between the finest novelties that will bloom for us for the first time this summer. In reality these might be termed pre-release seeds because next year their parents will be used to a large extent for the production of 1935 seeds. Offered only in one mixture. Seeds not available before September.

PRICES

We have only one price, \$2.50 per packet of at least one hundred seeds.

LYONDEL DELPHINIUM PLANTS

Hitherto we have not offered large plants of delphinium for sale because of lack of proper facilities. We are happy to announce that through an arrangement with Mr. Robert Schreiner, Route 1, River-view Station, Saint Paul, Minn., we can supply one and two year old plants. For prices and other details write directly to Mr. Schreiner whose integrity and well established reputation as a grower of irises and other perennials should assure a thorough satisfaction.

BABY SEEDLINGS

In the spring of each year we offer a limited quantity of seedlings from August-sown seeds. These will bloom the same year. No seedlings sold after the 20th of April because our season will be too far advanced by then for a safe delivery of seedlings. While our responsibility ceases after the delivery of the packages to the post office, we realize

that delays in transit may often ruin the tender seedlings. If notified immediately, we will be glad to make replacements without charge. *This is merely a matter of accomodation and not an obligation.* Price \$2.50 per dozen postpaid.

VISITORS

Visitors are always welcome. On the 20th of June our plants in Morgantown are at the height of their blooming. Our main planting is some 35 miles away from Morgantown and up in the mountains. The season is about two or three weeks later. We will have younger seedlings in bloom from June until the end of October.

TERMS

Strictly cash in advance. We have neither the time nor the taste for bookkeeping. C. O. D. orders not accepted.

COMPLAINTS

We have nothing but the current season's seeds; each seed-lot is tested for germination. WE KNOW that our seeds will germinate very well. Therefore, if you fail to obtain good germination, it is not the fault of our seeds. Don't complain to us about it, as such complaints will be utterly disregarded.

